

REMARKS

Claims 3-7, 9, 33-36, 66-75, and 77-82 were pending in this application when the present Office Action was mailed (January 30, 2007). In this response, claim 82 has been amended, and claim 80 has been cancelled. Accordingly, claims 3-7, 9, 33-36, 66-75, 77-79, 81 and 82 are currently pending.

The status of the application in light of the January 30, 2007 Office Action is as follows:

(A) Claims 78, 79 and 82 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over the combination of U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2002/0180035 to Huang et al. ("Huang") and U.S. Patent No. 5,483,098 to Joiner, Jr. ("Joiner"), and claim 77 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over the combination of Huang, Joiner and U.S. Patent No. 5,406,117 to Dlugokecki et al. ("Dlugokecki");

(B) Claim 80 was subject to an objection as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten into independent form; and

(C) Claims 3-7, 9, 33-36, 66-75 and 81 are allowed.

A. Response to the Section 103(a) Rejections

Claims 78, 79 and 82 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over the combination of Huang and Joiner, and claim 77 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over the combination of Huang, Joiner and Dlugokecki. Without commenting on or conceding the merits of these rejections, claim 82 has been amended to incorporate the subject matter of allowable claim 80. As a result, claim 82 is now patentable over the cited references. Claims 77-79 are also patentable over the cited references because these claims depend from claim 82, and also because these claims contain additional features. Accordingly, the Section 103 rejections of claims 77-79 and 82 should be withdrawn.

B. Response to Claim Objection

Claim 80 was subject to an objection as being dependent upon a rejected base claim. Claim 80 has been cancelled. Accordingly, the objection to claim 80 is now moot.

C. Indication of Allowable Subject Matter

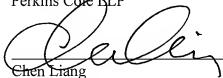
Although the applicant's attorney agrees with the Examiner's conclusion that claims 3-7, 9, 33-36, 66-75 and 81 are allowable, the applicant's attorney notes that the claims may be allowable for reasons other than those identified by the Examiner and does not concede that the Examiner's characterization of the terms of the claims and the prior art are correct.

D. Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, the pending claims comply with the requirements of 35 U.S.C. § 112 and are patentable over the applied art. The applicant accordingly requests reconsideration of the application and a Notice of Allowance. If the Examiner has any questions or believes a telephone conference would expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is encouraged to contact the undersigned representative at (206) 359-6038.

Respectfully submitted,

Perkins Coie LLP


Chen Liang
Registration No. 51,945

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Correspondence Address:

Customer No. 25096
Perkins Coie LLP
P.O. Box 1247
Seattle, Washington 98111-1247
(206) 359-8000